Wanted: Men for the Army

By CAPTAIN FRANK E. EVANS, U. S. M. C. Recruiting Office

ODD files of humanity wash in with the tide that flows into our modern recruiting offices. The recruiter divides them into four classes: the "prospect," the "boot," the "previous service man," and the "repeater."

The "prospect" is the man who asks casual questions of the recruiting sergeant. If he passes this conversational stage and passes the preliminary examination, he becomes a boot. Flat feet and poor teeth and eyes thin out the applicants' prospects, so that but one in twelve rises to the dignity of a boot. The previous service man is, of course, the man who reënlists.

"Back to the Army Again, Sergeant"

OF the four classes, the repeater is at the same time the most interesting and the most vexatious to the recruiting officer. Either he has been "scrapped" by Uncle Sam's medical survey as unfit—handed the "yellow ticket" as undesirable, so called because his discharge is made out on a yellow form instead of on the parchment of the honorably discharged—or has deserted the colors. He comes back in a surprisingly large number, under a false name, and resorts to every device to reënter the service. If the army sees through his deception, he hikes to the nearest navy or marine corps recruiting office. Rejected by all three, he rides the brake-beams to another city, to go through the same routine.

The recruiting service has its own checks on the repeater's ambition. The finger-print system leads all the rest.

If a man shows suspicious ear-marks, his finger-prints are "rolled" on an official form, and this is transmitted to Washington with the notation "Special" written across its face in red ink. Within two hours of its receipt a telegram is received from Washington, showing no previous service or giving his name and history.

The betrayal of former service by habits of the drill-ground or the slang of barracks or ship argot crop out at times and lighten the weeding-out labor. When the man strips for examination and walks across the floor at command, he will almost invariably start off with the left foot and halt in the position of a soldier. The examination goes on, and at the abrupt order "About face!" he executes the move without hesitation. Or, as he warms up to the flavor of the old atmosphere for which he longs, "When do you ship?" he will innocently ask; or, "How's the chow at the recruit depot?" If he seeks refuge in a stony silence, his reticence is equally suspicious, and a trap is laid for him. A pig on the instep, a Chinese dragon, a Japanese woman, a five-pointed star, sailor-knots, military devices, and patriotic emblems lead the tell-tale list of tattoo marks. In the navy the most popular device is the pig on the instep, the ancient charm of the Chinese against drowning. In the marines or the army the Chinese dragon wound about the arm leads in favor. The dragon came into vogue with the soldiers and marines who took part in the march of the allies to the rescue of the legations at Peking in 1900.

The reënlisted man, with his discharge from the service to show his identity, goes through the examination with quiet efficiency. Any recruiting officer can step into a crowded examination room and spot him. When he strips he folds each bit of clothing and lays it on a chair as if making it ready for a clothing locker. He is scrupulously clean in dress and body, and radiates self-respect.

Few Thrills in a Recruiter's Day

PROSPECTS and boots are apt to be a colorless lot. You may, however, if you are lucky, begin in the morning with a manufacturer of boys' "pants" who has tired of commercial strife, and follow up with a miniature Houdini. His kit of sixty-odd keys, wires, jimmies, odd button-hooks, and nails opens any door, as he demonstrates; but his uncanny skill bars the door to the service. There is no meaner thief than the "sea-bag" or "clothing-locker" thief. The next boot walks in to his examination with such an exaggerated display of the feet that you find he has been a clown who specialized in the Charlie Chaplin walk. A collegian enlists for a commission, a veteran of the Canadian contingent who was "gassed" at Ypres comes in, followed by a quiet, gray-eyed youngster who has walked thirty miles to enlist. Thus ends a recruiting officer's day's haul of "boots."

Notice to Poets

THE poet who flung roses, roses riotously with the throng should have known Miss Margaret E. Boal of East Glendale, California. For Miss Boal could have supplied all the flora necessary for him and for the throng too. She has 7500 two-year-old Ulrich Bruners and 1200 Cecil Bruners (these are rose plants, you understand, not gentlemen); and she sells and gives away thousands of roses every week, not to mention the rose petals that she sells to perfumers.

For seventeen years Miss Boal was a milliner. Then, pretty well fagged out, she put the finishing touches to a nervous collapse by studying law. This meant that she had to get out in the open air, and so she sunk her savings in the Glendale Ranch, bought a shovel, a two-hundred-dollar bungalow, and a few rose slips.

She hires a man to plow for her, but all the rest of the work—the raking, cultivating, weeding, and irrigating—she does herself. She pushes a wheelbarrow over her five acres with ten times the gusto that she ever exhibited in stitching hats in the millinery establishment.

"If you know of any other poets who are planning a rose campaign, you must get their addresses and I will send them my circulars," says Miss Boal. Of course it is too bad for Miss Boal that poets are inclined to talk more about roses than to use them, and when they order a dozen Cecil Bruners for a riot they are apt to quibble over the price. And where are the good old days when Emperor Nero stifled a roomful of guests in a shower of rose-petals?

Photograph from Albert Marple.

Miss Margaret E. Boal has to clip 8700 rose bushes; but she likes that better than basting bonnets in a millinery factory, which was her first job.